

Make us reach the month of Ramaẓän

The noble month of Ramaẓän. How glorious! How piety-inducing! How sin-suppressing! It's the time when the Ever-Generous Allāh becomes far more Bounteous forgiving the sinners in masses and rewarding the virtuous aplenty. The virtues and benefits of this month even led the holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ to pray to Allāh to make him reach the holy month. At the onset of Rajab itself, he could be found praying: "Allāh! Grant us your blessings in the month of Rajab and Sha'ebän and make us reach the month of Ramaẓän."¹ In the preceding month of Sha'ebän, he would be observing more fasts than any other month as it serves as a prelude to Ramaẓän. On being asked the reason, he would say, "This is the month coming between Rajab and Ramaẓän which most of the people neglect. In this the annual record of acts is presented to the Lord, so I love that my acts be presented to Him while I am observing fast."²

But over-zeal towards Sha'ebän could harm the general Muslims. Following the footsteps of the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, there could be some who would try to overstep him. The general observance of fasting in the whole of Sha'ebän could lead some to think that fasting was obligatory in both the months in a like manner, or at least the fasts of Sha'ebän were close to obligatory. So, to prevent this, he actively discouraged the common people from fasting in the later fortnight of Sha'ebän³. And he strongly advised against fasting a day or two before Ramaẓän for the populace. However, a person who had been a regular faster on some particular day, e.g. Monday and Thursday, and that day fell in the end of Sha'ebän, then he could proceed with his fast.⁴ These steps were taken to ensure that Allāh-ordained obligations are practiced as is, without any increment or decrement.

Thus, a Muslim should get in the preparation mode for welcoming Ramaẓän in the month of Sha'ebän itself. And finally, when the happy evening comes, he should try to observe the moon himself. If Allāh favors him with moon-sighting, then he should recite the prayer which our Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ taught us: "Allāh! Make it for us a harbinger of security and Faith, peace and Islām. (O Crescent!) My Lord and your Lord is Allāh."⁵ It is reported that Ĥaẓrat Ālī used to say on sighting a crescent: "Allāh! Grant us its goodness, victory, blessing and light. And I seek your protection from its evil and the evil of what follows it."⁶

In all these there is a lesson for us that every event and every occurrence should take a Believer's thoughts to Allāh: to His bounty and His wrath, to His mercy and His justice, to His wisdom and His Knowledge. We, in our entirety belong to Him alone and we are to return to none else but He. All the great manifestations of beauty and power in the sky or on the earth remind us of our and their Lord, Allāh.

In the case of bad weather obstructing crescent-sighting, we are directed to rely on reliable evidence from other regions. A qāẓī or a local Crescent Committee should be relied upon in this matter. Here, the general principle is the ḥadīth of Tirmizī: "Start fasting on sighting the moon and end fasting on sighting the moon. However, if cloud prevents its sighting, then complete thirty days."⁷ Thus, a Muslim in all environments and countries and political situations can easily practice these rulings. In times of floods and earthquakes, of wars and state repressions, when all telecommunication links are cut off, a Muslim can observe these simple rules. May Allāh bless all of us with Ramaẓän!

¹ Shu'ab-ul Īmān: 3654 (ولعلنا رمضان) (اللهم بارك لنا في رجب ، وشعبان ، وبلغنا رمضان)

² Ahmad: 20758 (ذَٰكَ شَهْرٌ يُغْفَلُ النَّاسُ عَنْهُ بَيْنَ رَجَبٍ وَرَمَضَانَ وَهُوَ شَهْرٌ يُرْفَعُ فِيهِ الْأَعْمَالُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ فَأَجِبْ أَنْ يُرْفَعَ عَمَلِي وَأَنَا صَائِمٌ)

³ Tirmizī: 669 (إِذَا بَقِيَ بِصُفٍّ مِنْ شَعْبَانَ فَلَا تُصُومُوا)

⁴ Bukhārī: 1781 (لَا يَتَقَدَّمَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ رَمَضَانَ بِصَوْمِ يَوْمٍ أَوْ يَوْمَيْنِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ رَجُلٌ كَانَ يَصُومُ صَوْمَهُ فَلْيَصُمْ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ)

⁵ Tirmizī: 3373 (اللَّهُمَّ أَهْلِلْهُ عَلَيْنَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَالسَّلَامَةِ وَالْإِسْلَامِ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكَ اللَّهُ)

⁶ Muṣannaf Ibn e Abi Shaibah: 30366 (اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنَا خَيْرَهُ وَتَصَرُّهُ وَبَرَكَتَهُ وَثَوْرَهُ وَتَعَوُّدُكَ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهِ مَا بَعْدَهُ)

⁷ Tirmizī: 624 (صُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ وَأَفْطِرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ فَإِنْ حَالَثَ دُونَهُ غَيَابَةٌ فَأَكْمِلُوا ثَلَاثِينَ يَوْمًا)